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LOST YEARS FOUND...

SPIDER-MAN®: REDEMPTION

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BACK AWAY!

YOU HEAR ME, DIRTBAG?

I DON'T KNOW WHAT KINDA WEIRDNESS YOU'RE UP TO--

--BUT YOU BACK AWAY FROM THAT BOX RIGHT NOW OR I'LL--

OR YOU'LL WHAT?

KILL ME?!

PLEASE, GENTLEMEN-- I INVITE YOU!

FIRE YOUR WEAPONS! PUMP ALL YOUR BULLETS INTO ME!

WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE TREMBLING AND DROOLING--

DO SOMETHING!

HA-HA-HA-HA-HA!!

DON'T-- DON'T HURT ME... PLEASE--

SHRAKK

BELIEVE ME, OFFICER--I COULD HELP YOU *RE-DEFINE* THE WORD "HURT."

ONE TOUCH OF MY HAND AND YOUR FLESH WILL BURN.

YOUR VERY *CELLS* WILL EXPLODE.

SHALL I *SHOW* YOU?

SSSSSSS

Y-YOU'RE *CRAZY!*

YOU'RE FREAKIN' *CRAZY!*

IF ONLY I WAS.

I'D GONE TO THAT FUNERAL HOME IN SEARCH OF AN OLD FRIEND: *DEATH.*

I'D *BEEN* DEAD, ONCE-- BUT EVENTS TOO CONVOLUTED TO SUMMARIZE HERE BROUGHT ME UP, OUT OF THE BLESSED DARKNESS.

I DIDN'T KNOW THE MAN IN THE COFFIN. BUT HE WAS YOUNG-- NO MORE THAN THIRTY OR THIRTY-FIVE.

WHY, I WONDERED, HAD HE BEEN *SO* BLESSED? WHY HAD HE FOUND THE PEACE, THE SWEET OBLIVION, I WANTED MORE THAN ANYTHING ON EARTH?

WHY?!

PERHAPS, I THOUGHT, IT WAS A HEART ATTACK. OR SOME INSIDIOUS DISEASE.

MY NAME IS *KAINE* --AND I KNOW ALL ABOUT DISEASES.

I'VE BEEN AFFLICTED, SINCE BIRTH, WITH A SICKNESS THAT PERVADES BOTH BODY AND SOUL.

AND, IN MY OWN WAY, I HAVE BEEN FOREVER SEEKING A *CURE.*

THAT NIGHT I *SAW* THE CURE IN A CORPSE'S WAXEN FACE. DEATH, I KNEW, WAS THE *ONLY ANSWER* FOR ME.

BUT I KNEW ONE *OTHER* THING:

KRAASHHH

I HAD NO INTENTION OF DYING ALONE.

STAN LEE PRESENTS:

SPIDER-MAN: REDEMPTION

by J.M. DEMATTEIS, MIKE ZECK & BOB McLEOD

CHAPTER ONE: yesterday

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KRA-KOOO

The world calls me SPIDER-MAN...but my name is BEN REILLY. It's not the name I was born with, but it was the one I was using.

Back when Harry knew me I was PETER PARKER. But that was lifetimes ago--before a maniac named THE JACKAL tore my life apart ...stripped me of my identity...

...and sent me into exile for five unendurable years.

No, that's not true. They weren't all unendurable. There were real moments of grace during those lost years. Moments of love and hope.

Moments of sweet redemption.

I think I returned to New York a stronger--a BETTER--man for my ordeal. Certainly a DIFFERENT one. By that time in my life, I was more Ben than Peter --and there was no going back.

But on that bleak September night... I WANTED to go back. With all my heart and SOUL I wanted it.

Wanted to see my friend, to tell him how much he meant to me. To do something... ANYTHING! ...to stop him from dying!

There was, I suddenly realized, a REASON I'd put off visiting Harry's grave: If I allowed myself to feel the pain of losing HIM...

...I'd have to feel the pain of losing ALL of it.

Every minute of every hour of every day...

...OF EVERY YEAR.

Harry had a wife...and a LITTLE BOY I'd never really known.

All I wanted that night was to bang on the door of Liz's apartment... tell her how terrible I felt...how I'd do ANY-THING to help.

"I'll be a father to NORMAN... I'll be a friend to YOU. We'll keep Harry's memory alive TOGETHER. We'll hold on tight to the past."

But I couldn't.

...because even in the city I grew UP in...

The past-- PARKER'S past --was as dead as Harry Osborn. Guess those lost years never really ended...

...I WAS AN EXILE.

HOW MANY TIMES DID I WANT TO GET OFF THAT TRAIN?

AT EVERY STOP, I GUESS. LOOKING BACK ON IT ALL, I PROBABLY *SHOULD* HAVE GOTTEN OFF.

NO. THAT'S THE *CYNIC* IN ME TALKING.

BEN USED TO SAY THAT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS A CYNIC. JUST IDEALISTS WEARING MASKS.

I THINK THAT'S TRUE.

LIFE'S BEEN *HARD* FOR ME SINCE THOSE DAYS IN NEW YORK: HARD AND LONELY. BUT, AS FUNNY AS IT MAY SOUND, I'VE NEVER FELT MORE *FREE*...

...BECAUSE I'M NOT WEARING A MASK ANYMORE.

AND I HAVE BEN TO THANK FOR IT. BEN--AND IN A STRANGE WAY...

Amtrak

828

MILK

...KAINE.

I'M THE SHADOW THAT'S ALWAYS BEHIND YOU. I'M THE BREATH ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK.

YOU'LL NEVER KNOW PEACE SO LONG AS I LIVE. AND WHEN I *DIE*--

MILK

--YOU'LL BURN IN HELL *BESIDE* ME.

GET AWAY FROM

KRAAK

ME!!

SPAKT!

I'D BEEN HUNKERING THERE IN THE DARKNESS, WATCHING HIM SLEEP FOR HOURS. WATCHING HIM THRASH AND WHIMPER.

WHAT NIGHTMARE, I WONDERED, HAUNTED BEN REILLY? WHAT DEMON HAD DRIVEN HIM UP OUT OF SLEEP, A SCREAM TRAPPED IN HIS THROAT?

ME, PER-HAPS?

AFTER ALL, WE WERE LINKED, REILLY AND I: *HIS* WERE THE CELLS I WAS CLONED FROM -- HOWEVER *IMPERFECT* THAT CLONING WAS.

OUR MINDS AND HEARTS COULDN'T HELP BUT VIBRATE AROUND EACH OTHER: I'D BREATHE IN, HE'D EXHALE. I'D GROW FEVERISH...

...HE'D *BURN.*

SO I THINK HE UNDERSTOOD, AS WE LOCKED EYES, AS WE STOOD FACING EACH OTHER IN THE SILENCE OF OUR SOULS, THAT I HAD NO DESIRE TO FIGHT. I HADN'T COME THERE FOR BLOOD.

I'D COME TO *WARN* HIM.

I'D COME TO *ANNOUNCE* MYSELF.

I'D COME TO FIRE THE *FIRST VOLLEY* IN A WAR THAT, WITH LUCK...

RRRRAKK

SKOMM!

...WOULD DESTROY US BOTH.

I had a heckuva headache when I came to... but I knew it could've been worse. A LOT worse:

He could've killed me while I was sleeping.

Y'see, my spider-sense didn't work where Kaine was concerned. He simply didn't register. I'm not sure why.

Maybe Kaine was right--he was my shadow. And how much notice do you give your own shadow?

Not ENOUGH, I guess.

He'd BEEN my shadow all through my years of exile. Haunting me, hunting me, across the country... across the WORLD. Taking every opportunity to destroy what precious little happiness I could find.

It wasn't until I returned to New York that I discovered Kaine was the first clone of Peter Parker. A FAILED clone, at that... whose rapid cellular degeneration made him worthless to his creator, Professor Miles Warren. THE JACKAL.

So Warren drove him away...and Kaine set his sights on **ME.** Why? Any respectable psychiatrist could come up with a list of reasons a mile long...

...but sometimes I think he just needed a focus for his pain. For his hate.

ONE WAY

ONE WAY

And yet, despite all he'd done, I couldn't hate **HIM**, in return.

The joke of it all, I realized, was that we'd travelled so far together, been through so much...

...that Kaine had become one of the few people in my life I felt some kind of genuine **CONNECTION** to--however **TWISTED** that connection was.

In all my years on the road, only three people ever broke through the facade that was Ben Reilly: **KAINE. SEWARD TRAINER...**

...and **JANINE.**

JANINE. Just thinking about her got me crazy. Made me want to curl up into a ball and scream.

Maybe that's why I found myself walking in the rain at two in the morning, wandering, like a sleepwalker, into a dingy little West Side bar.

Not because of Kaine--but because seeing him made me remember the greatest love I ever knew.

And the greatest **LOSS.**

CLUB SODA WITH LIME.

OH, A HARD DRINKER, HUH?

MAKE IT A DOUBLE.

THINK YA CAN HANDLE IT?

GIVE THE GUY A **BREAK,** AL.

EVERYBODY DESERVES A BREAK, RIGHT?

HOW YA DOIN', BUD? NAME'S **FLASH.** FLASH **THOMPSON.**

Sometimes God's got one **WEIRD** sense of humor: of all the stools in all the bars in New York...

...I managed to pick one right next to my old high school nemesis.

But Flash seemed as much a ghost to me as Harry Osborn. I felt like I was looking at a total stranger. And between my pulled-down cap, the bad lighting, and the fact that Flash was five beers to the wind...

I'M... BEN.

...SO did he.

I'LL TELL YA, BEN...WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL... I WAS THE MAN. I MEAN, THERE WAS NOBODY ELSE.

MAYBE I WASN'T THE BIGGEST BRAIN ON TWO FEET... BUT OUT ON THE FOOTBALL FIELD NO ONE COULD TOUCH ME.

THE BABES ALL ADORED ME... THE GUYS ALL WANTED T'BE ME.

I HAD IT ALL, Y'KNOW?

SO WHAT HAPPENED... TELL ME THAT? HOW'D I BLINK AND FIND MYSELF TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OLD...WITH A BEER BELLY--

--AND GETTING PAID GARBAGE FOR WORKING IN A TWO-BIT YOUTH CENTER, FOR GOD'S SAKE?

BEEN OUT POUNDING THE PAVEMENT ALL DAY...LOOKING FOR A NEW JOB. BUT NOBODY WANTS ME. I'VE GOT NOTHING TO OFFER, THEY SAY.

I'D GIVE ANYTHING T'BE BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL AGAIN... GIRLS ALL OVER ME... RAGGING ON PUNY PARKER.

PARKER! NOW THERE'S ONE I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE T'FIGURE OUT.

BIGGEST NERD Y'EVER MET. ALL HE CARED ABOUT WAS TEST TUBES AND HIS SICK OLD AUNT--

--AND HE ENDS UP A BIG-NAME PHOTOGRAPHER... MARRIED TO A MODEL. I MEAN, HE'S GOT IT ALL, Y'KNOW?

AN' WHAT'VE I GOT, HUH?

MY HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK--AND A BUNCH O'DUSTY OLD FOOTBALL TROPHIES.

DON'T LET HIM DRINK ANYMORE, OKAY?

FOR ANOTHER TEN BUCKS--I WON'T DRINK ANYMORE.

WANT A LITTLE ADVICE, FLASH?

NOT REALLY.

WELL YOU'RE GONNA GET IT ANYWAY.

STOP WALLOWING IN SELF-PITY... STOP LIVING IN YESTERDAY... AND APPRECIATE WHAT YOU'VE GOT *HERE AND NOW.*

THE PAST IS *DEAD*, OL' BUDDY--

--AND IT WASN'T AS GLORIOUS AS YOU *REMEMBER* IT.

Y'KNOW--

--HE JUST MIGHT BE *RIGHT.*

Was I talking to Flash--or to myself? Both of us, I suppose.

The one thing I knew for sure was that I wasn't going to end up on some bar-stool somewhere, crying over what *MIGHT* have been.

Yesterday be damned, I decided, webbing my way home; feeling--for no logical reason--better than I had in days.

Time to make a LIFE for myself. And no ghosts of the past...

...were gonna get in my way.

HEY, REILLY--

--ANYBODY EVER TELL YOU YOU LOOK SENSATIONAL IN TIGHTS?

I...I DON'T BELIEVE IT! IT'S NOT POSSIBLE!

JANINE?!

I SAW THE LOVE IN HER EYES, THE SHOCK AND BEWILDERMENT ON HIS FACE...

...BUT IT GAVE ME NO GREAT SATISFACTION.

I FELT AN UNBEARABLE WEIGHT, AN UNFATHOMABLE *SADNESS*, PULLING AT MY HEART.

WAS IT PITY FOR REILLY--KNOWING WHAT WAS TO COME? OR PITY FOR MYSELF--KNOWING ALL THAT HAD BEEN?

I PUSHED THE QUESTIONS OUT OF MY MIND, DROVE THE SADNESS DOWN INTO THE BLACKNESS OF MY SOUL...

DARK

...ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT THERE WAS ANOTHER, *DARKER* EMOTION, CRAWLING UP TO REPLACE IT:

GUILT.

GUILT? NOW THAT MY PLAN WAS FINALLY SET IN MOTION...WAS I ACTUALLY REGRETTING IT? WAS THERE A PART OF ME THAT *WANTED* MY DOUBLE TO HAVE THE PEACE AND HAPPINESS THAT I HAD ALWAYS BEEN DENIED?

LOOKING BACK, I SEE THAT THERE *WAS*--BUT THEN THE VERY *IDEA* THAT I COULD DO *ANYTHING* BUT HATE THE MAN WHOSE CELLS BIRTHED ME...

KA-SHA

...DROVE ME WILD.

AWRIGHT--MAYBE YER *DRUNK*. MAYBE Y'DON'T REALIZE THAT THIS IS A *PRIVATE CLUB* Y'JUST BUSTED INTO.

SO Y'GOT *TEN SECONDS* T'GET YER BUTT OUTTA HERE.

KLIK

AFTER *THAT*--

KRAAACH!

NO, MY THOUGHTS SCREAMED, I DON'T *WANT* HIM TO BE HAPPY!

I WANT HIM TO SUFFER AND STRUGGLE AND BLEED!

I WANT HIM TO BURN AS *I'VE* BURNED!

I WANT HIM TO *DIE*...

CHOT!

CHAK CHAK CHAK CHAK CHAK

TAM!

BAMBAMBAMB

...AND REILLY'S.

HOW-- HOW CAN THIS BE?

YOU'RE DEAD.

YOU'RE DEAD.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND--YOU ASKED ME TO COME HERE.

YOU WROTE TO ME...TOLD ME WHERE YOU WERE--

FOR GOD'S SAKE, BEN, YOU SENT ME THE KEY TO YOUR APARTMENT!

WHY ARE YOU ACTING LIKE THIS IS SOME KIND OF SURPRISE?

YOU'RE NOT REAL. YOU CAN'T BE REAL.

I NEVER WROTE TO YOU. HOW COULD I? YOU DIED...OVER A YEAR AGO.

THIS...THIS IS SOME KIND OF TRICK. IT'S THE JACKAL, ISN'T IT? YOU'RE A CLONE AND HE'S TRYING TO--

IT'S ME, BEN.

IT'S ME.

AND IN THAT MOMENT--HE BELIEVED. IN THAT MOMENT--OUR LOVE WAS REBORN.

THE WORDS HE WHISPERED IN MY EAR AS HE HELD ME CLOSE ARE WRITTEN ON MY HEART FOREVER. I'VE NEVER BEEN LOVED SO DEEPLY--OR SO WELL.

ALL MY LONELINESS... ALL THE PAIN AND FEAR OF THE MONTHS WE'D BEEN APART...MELTED AWAY IN THAT MOMENT. TWO LONELY HEARTS BECAME ONE...

...AND LIFE WAS *NEW* AGAIN.

THERE WERE MYSTERIES TO BE SOLVED, FOR SURE: IF NOT BEN, WHO *DID* WRITE TO ME AND BRING ME TO NEW YORK? (BEN HAD HIS THEORIES, AND SO DID I, BUT WE WERE BOTH RELUCTANT TO DISCUSS THEM.) AND OF COURSE THERE WAS THE GREATEST MYSTERY OF ALL: THE MYSTERY OF MY SUPPOSED DEATH.

ALL THIS TIME HE THOUGHT I WAS GONE. ALL THIS TIME HE'D BEEN HAUNTED BY MY "GHOST."

I KNEW I HAD HURT BEN...IN WAYS I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TRULY FEEL OR UNDERSTAND... BUT I ALSO KNEW THAT WHAT I'D DONE WAS *RIGHT.*

TO BEN'S ETERNAL CREDIT, HE DIDN'T PUSH ME FOR ANSWERS. HE KNEW THAT I NEEDED TIME TO FEEL *SAFE* AGAIN, COMFORTABLE IN HIS ARMS. HE KNEW THAT, GIVEN TIME AND LOVE...

...I'D TELL HIM *EVERYTHING.*

SO WE DRIFTED THROUGH THOSE NEXT BLESSED WEEKS, INTOXICATED BY OUR PASSION FOR EACH OTHER. HAPPY BEYOND IMAGINING. JUST TO BE TOGETHER AGAIN... DOING SIMPLE, EVERYDAY THINGS ...WAS A FULFILLMENT BEYOND ANYTHING EITHER OF US HAD EVER KNOWN.

WE WERE LIKE ONE SOUL EXISTING IN TWO BODIES. I'D BREATHE IN, HE'D EXHALE. I'D FEEL SORROW...

...AND HE'D CRY.

I THINK I ATE TOO MUCH.

YOU NEED TO EAT MORE. YOU'RE TOO SKINNY.

YOU KNOW WHAT I'D LOOK LIKE SWINGING AROUND TOWN IN MY SPIDEY SUIT-- WITH A POT BELLY HANGING OVER MY BELT?

I THINK YOU'D BE ADORABLE.

YEAH--BUT THE BAD GUYS'D NEVER LET ME LIVE IT DOWN.

I...I THINK IT'S TIME WE TALKED, BEN. ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED BACK IN SANTA CRUZ.

ONLY IF YOU'RE READY.

I AM. AFTER ALL THIS TIME, I REALLY THINK I--

KAAA-SHAAA

No warning from my spider-sense--which meant it could only be one person:

KAINE!!

If I'd been thinking, I would have switched into my Spider-suit. But I WASN'T thinking, I was FEELING:

Blind rage.

If Kaine wanted to play mind games with ME, it was one thing. But not Janine.

...and too much fear.

Her life had been a nightmare since she was a little girl -- living with a father whose UNSPEAK-ABLE ABUSES finally became too much to bear.

She killed him ...God forgive her, she killed her own FATHER...and had been running from the law ever since.

My sweet Janine -- who'd known too little love...

GO AHEAD, REILLY --ASK ME!

ASK ME WHY!

CHAANNGGAASH!

WHY DID I WRITE THE LETTER? WHY DID I LURE HER HERE?

KEEESH!

I DON'T CARE WHAT SICK REASONS YOU HAD! I JUST WANT YOU TO LET HER GO!

SHE'S SUFFERED ENOUGH, KAINE! YOU, OF ALL PEOPLE, SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT!

SHE'S SUFFERED ENOUGH!

AH...BUT IT'S NOT HER SUFFERING I'M CONCERNED WITH.

WHAT IS IT THEY SAY? THE GREATER THE JOY, THE GREATER THE PAIN?

AND IN ORDER FOR YOU TO TRULY FEEL PAIN--I NEEDED YOU TO FIRST EXPERIENCE THE GREATEST JOY POSSIBLE.

I HOPE THESE PAST WEEKS HAVE BEEN GLORIOUS...BECAUSE I ASSURE YOU--

--IT'S THE LAST JOY YOU'LL EVER KNOW!

WHERE IS SHE, YOU ANIMAL?

WHERE IS SHE?!

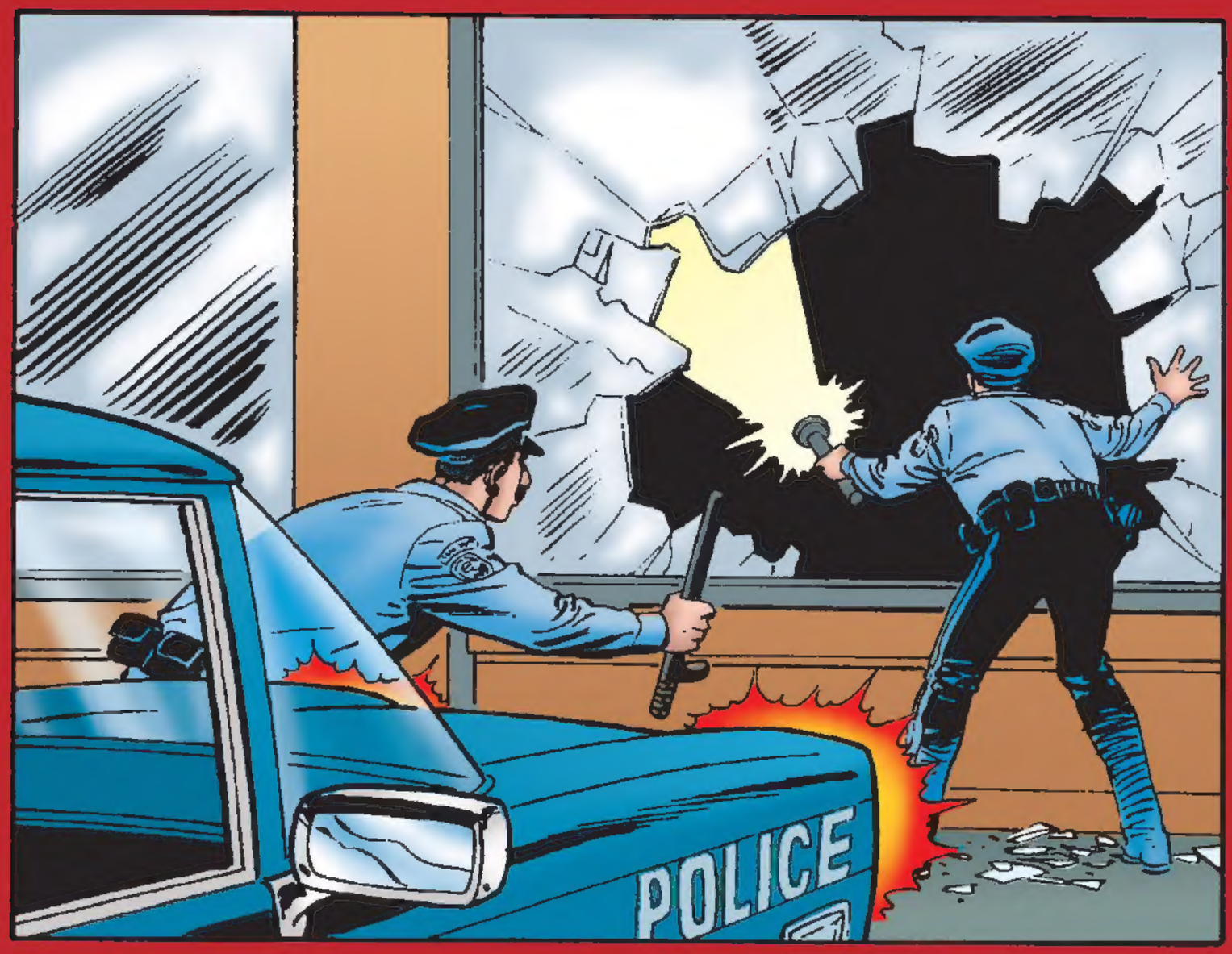
LET HER GO, BEN!

MEN LIKE US CAN NEVER HOLD ON TO LOVE!

WE WERE BORN TO MISERY--DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT?

THE ONLY PEACE WE CAN EVER KNOW--

HA HA HAAA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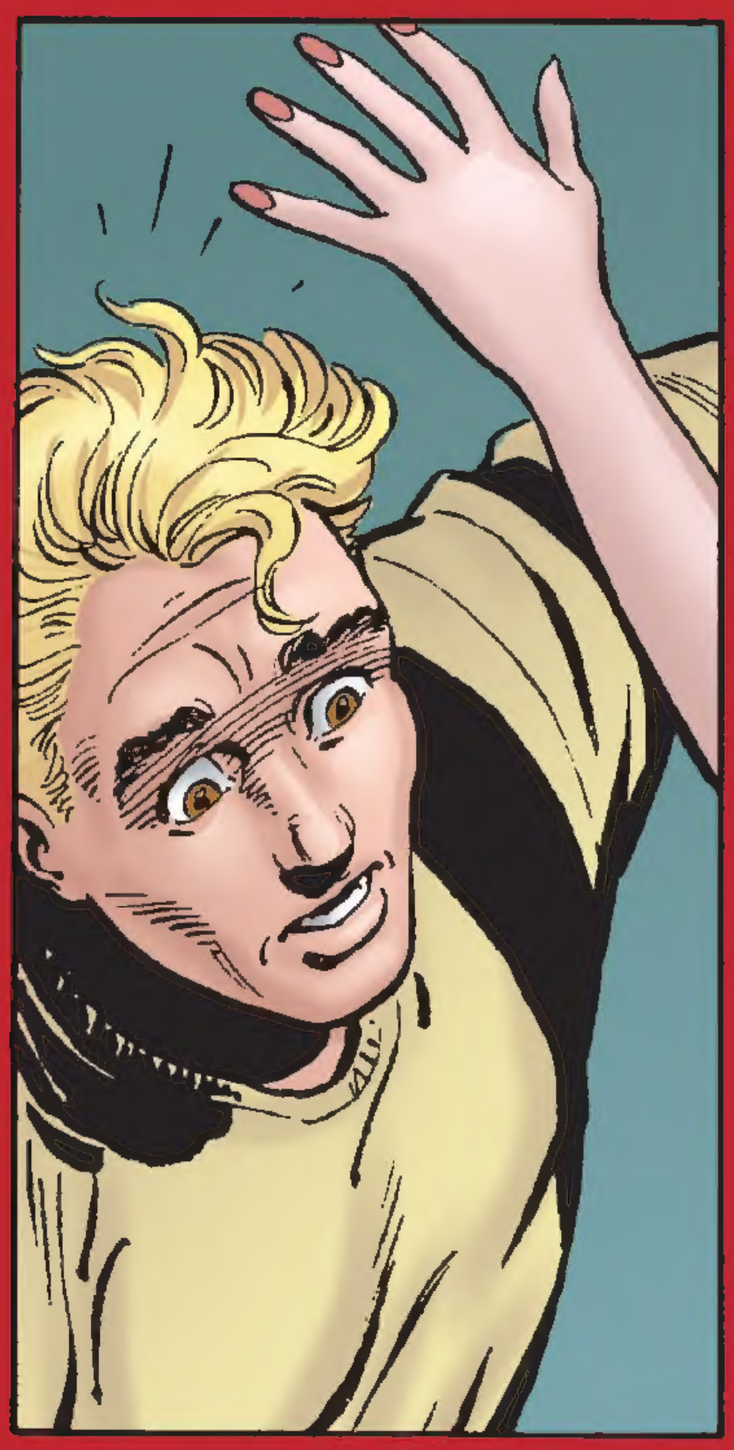

--IS THE PEACE OF THE GRAVE!

KOKKT!

THERE WAS NO FIGHT LEFT IN HIM.

HOW COULD THERE BE?

HIS BELOVED JANINE WAS DEAD ON THE FLOOR, NECK BROKEN...

...REILLY'S WORLD BROKEN WITH HER: SHATTERED INTO A THOUSAND JAGGED FRAGMENTS.

CHUD!

NO FIGHT LEFT. NO RESISTANCE.

ONLY THE DARK-NESS...

...WHERE WE BOTH BELONGED.

SKUFFT!

SUCH AGONY ON REILLY'S FACE, SUCH HORROR. A PART OF ME WANTED TO WIPE AWAY HIS TEARS...

...CLASP HIM TO MY BREAST AND BEG HIM TO FORGIVE ME.

BUT HOW COULD I? HE THOUGHT THIS WAS THE END OF OUR DANCE...

...WHILE I KNEW...

...THAT HIS SUFFERING HAD ONLY *BEGUN.*

NEXT: WAR GAMES!